



March 24, 2020

**Sent Via E-mail**

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor, State of Florida  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis,

As Floridians continue to contend with the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we cannot ignore the dangers confronting our First Responders and the sacrifices each of them are making. As this crisis continues to unfold, tens of thousands of First Responders are answering the call to serve without regard for their own safety. Unlike the public at large, first responders do not get the opportunity to employ social distancing, and must place themselves at a higher risk of contracting the Coronavirus in order to serve our communities. To make matters worse, they may be unknowingly bringing the virus home to their loved ones.

Our firm represents thousands of First Responders in the State of Florida and we are being flooded with calls about the lack of legal protections currently available to First Responders should they contract COVID-19. At last count, 47 NYFD firefighters have tested positive for the virus, and two are currently hospitalized. It will not be long before Florida First Responders begin contracting this virus. There should be no question that any Florida First Responder either quarantined or diagnosed with the virus should have the matter recognized as work related.

Across the nation, many states are introducing emergency legislation or issuing executive orders aimed at protecting First Responders. It is with the greatest respect that I implore you to act quickly to protect our First Responders. Please issue an Executive Order using the following language:

Notwithstanding any general or special law rule or regulation to the contrary, any public safety official, which shall include any individuals employed as law enforcement officers, fire personnel, correction officers, dispatchers, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, nursing professional, doctors and all individuals employed and considered as first responders, who contract, have symptoms of, or otherwise becomes affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19), that results in a period of hospitalization, quarantine, or require self-quarantined measures as a result of being infected or coming into contact with someone who is infected with this virus, shall have their medical condition or incapacity to work presumed to be work-related.

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THE FIRST RESPONDER LAW FIRM

The amount of time said public safety official is incapacitated or unable to perform their duties as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection or exposure and the required time of hospitalization, time of quarantine or time of self-quarantine shall be considered as on duty time, and said public safety official shall not be required to use sick time, vacation time, personal time or any other contractual time-off to cover said period of incapacitation or inability to perform regular duty work. This time of incapacitation or inability to perform their duties shall be considered as “emergency hazard health duty.”

I am aware that others are calling for an Executive Order suggesting the same or similar language. The time to act is now as there must be complete uniformity in how employing agencies will respond to this unprecedented crisis. Your leadership is needed, and greatly appreciated.

Humbly Yours,

*/s/ Geoffrey Bichler*

*Electronically signed to avoid delay*

Geoffrey Bichler, Esquire

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